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# Economic and Social Council

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**Commission for Social Development**
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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration**

## Statement submitted by the International Federation on Ageing, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2010/1.

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1. The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is a global network of organizations and individuals that work to improve the quality of life for older persons through advocacy for policy change. Through its biennial conferences, IFA provides international forums for information exchange and develops innovative partnerships on age-related issues. IFA participated in both the First and Second World Assemblies on Ageing and has been actively following progress in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

2. IFA regards the topic of social integration/social inclusion to be a fundamental basis for social development, and we commend the Commission for its focus on this issue. Social inclusion should be the right of every person of any age. Regrettably, older persons, despite their increasing numbers worldwide, continue to be marginalized in both developed and developing countries. Age discrimination and neglect can be documented in virtually every country. It is abundantly clear that social inclusion can become a reality for older persons only when their rights are recognized and acted upon.

3. What are these rights? Simply put, they include the same rights that are set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the right to equality before the law; the right to own and inherit property; the right to have adequate income support; the right to work; the right to have access to health care; and, importantly, the right to have freedom from violence and abuse.

4. One may ask why the need to address the rights of older persons specifically. The answer lies in the fact that as a group, older people remain invisible in the human rights discourse. Their rights are frequently overlooked in the development of legislation and policy as is the resulting impact of such actions. Age discrimination has not been seen as unacceptable nor equated to other aspects of discrimination such as racism or sexism. Indeed, it is rarely addressed.

5. Given this situation, IFA is pleased that steps on the part of Member States and the United Nations, as well as non-governmental organizations have been taken to begin to move towards formalizing the rights of older persons. These actions include the Third Committee's adoption last October of a resolution (A/C.3/64/L.6) requesting Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a "comprehensive report on the current status of the social situation, well-being, development and rights of older persons at the national and regional levels". The newly established Advisory Committee to the Human Rights Council has made the rights of older persons a priority issue and will present its recommendations on the issue in 2010. In October 2008, the General Assembly adopted a resolution instructing the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to prepare a study of older persons' rights, while in late 2007 the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean urged the United Nations to adopt a human rights convention and to appoint a special rapporteur on ageing. Also during the past two years at the regional level, Latin American Governments, notably those of Argentina, Brazil and Chile have been actively working towards developing a regional convention on the rights of older persons. Also a new protocol on these rights is under preparation, for inclusion in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

6. Moreover, IFA supports the view of the Expert Group Meeting, held in Helsinki in July 2008, which recommended an additional Millennium Development Goal exclusively related to social inclusion that provides a detailed breakdown of

goals, targets and indicators to capture the vulnerability of certain groups. We see the growing older population as a significant one of these groups.

7. In the same spirit that older persons strive for their rights, they are just as concerned for those of the young people in their lives. The multigenerational make-up of families and communities must work together for a common goal: a decent quality of life for all. Multigenerational relationships are key elements in addressing the rights of older persons. We are interdependent in our lives, regardless of place or time. Towards this end, such relationships must be strengthened as life issues such as poverty, health and education are given attention in each country and culture.

8. With increasing numbers of older persons worldwide and recognizing the need to ensure their full inclusion in society, it is time to take the steps necessary to establish their rights as a universal reality. IFA recognizes that effective implementation of new policies to address this goal is a major challenge. Nonetheless, it is a challenge that the United Nations, national Governments and civil society have an opportunity to join together in meeting. We stand ready to join in partnership with Governments to achieve an inclusive society that integrates both young and old — a true Society for All Ages.